

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, D. C. May 29, 1966. The first art exhibition in the United States to reflect all of Turkey's major civilizations--from prehistoric times to the sultans' age of opulence--opens Sunday, June 5, at the National Gallery of Art.

Art Treasures of Turkey is a panoramic 286-object assemblage of stone, bronze, gold, silver, ivory, porcelain, carpets, silks, armor and illuminated manuscripts. It includes classical statuary, jewel-encrusted belts and daggers from the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, an 8,000 year-old obsidian mirror, and delicate golden jewelry worn in Troy 1,000 years before the Trojan War.

There are bronze grave offerings dating back to 2400 B. C., fertility idols from the 6th to the 3rd millennium B. C. and a number of recent discoveries from the Greek and Roman periods of the land known once as Anatolia.

The great early moments of Turkish history happened under the Hittites of the 2nd millennium B. C. who also left a deep artistic imprint. Animal-shaped drinking

vessels in the exhibition, and massive stone sculptures of the gods, some weighing as much as a ton, show the advanced state of art during the Hittites time of power.

In the next ten centuries the area was conquered and reconquered, as the Phrygians, Lydians, Persians, Greeks and Romans enjoyed the land's riches. Each triumphant civilization left hidden treasures such as two bronze statues from the Golden Ionian Age which were discovered in Turkey's coastal waters just in time to be included in the exhibition. There is also an exceptionally fine life-size marble statue of a young Greek athlete which was recovered in this generation. Several of the Roman portrait heads in the collection were recent discoveries in archaeological digs at Sardis and Aphrodisias. A bronze portrait of the Emperor Trajan dates from the rich and relatively peaceful period of the 2nd century A. D. when the region was part of the Roman Empire.

When, in the early 4th century, Emperor Constantine established his "Second Rome" on the Bosphorus, and Constantinople became the eastern center of Christianity, the area's art began to show an increasingly mixed Oriental-Christian influence. An early Byzantine work in the exhibition, a marble portrait of Emperor Arcadius, indicates the growing stylization of forms, while a 6th century silver dish shows two extremes--Hellenistic figures set in a Byzantine two-dimensional field.

In the 11th century, the region was conquered by the Seldjuk Turks who brought their arabesque motifs and calligraphic verses from the Koran. Rug making, an art in which Turkish craftsmen excelled perhaps above all others, was imported from the East, and is represented in the exhibition by rare examples dating from the 13th and 14th centuries.

Brightly decorated robes of silk, jewel-encrusted weapons and books, armor and mirrors, and delicate inlaid chests are from the sumptuous world of the Ottoman Turks who ruled from the 13th to the 20th century. Many of these objects are lent by the famed Topkapi Museum, a treasure house of the sultans' splendor.

Among the exhibition's manuscripts and Turkish miniature paintings is one of the earliest maps of Central America, drawn by a Turkish navigator who studied the notes of Christopher Columbus.

Art Treasures of Turkey is under the patronage of The President of the United States of America and The President of the Republic of Turkey and is being circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. After opening at the National Gallery, it will be seen in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Houston, Kansas City, Seattle, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Boston and New York. It was selected by a committee of distinguished scholars including Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, Freer Gallery

of Art, Washington, D. C.; Miss Machteld Mellink, Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania; Dr. John S. Thacher, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D. C.; Dr. Rodney Young, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; and members of the Antiquities Department of the Turkish Ministry of Education.

The exhibition will be on the Ground Floor of the Gallery. It will continue through Sunday, July 17. It is open weekdays from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; Sundays 12:00 Noon to 10:00 p.m. Admission free.

End

Black-and-white glossy photographs on loan for purposes of publication are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565. Area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.